

▼ NOVEMBER

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PHOTO • PIETER DEVOS

*How do you
expect me to
feed my kids?*

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The spare change newspaper

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- Stories, pages 6 & 7,
- About this woman, page 4

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*Michelle and David
sell this paper
Vendor Profile...3*



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The booby trap gang gets the yuccas

Bosom alert! In Madrid, a 6 ft. blonde woman has been washing car windows topless. "She did mine four times," said one perspiring motorist. "Good visibility is so important." Equally uplifting have been events in London, where a woman has been stealing from shops while her accomplice flashes her breasts to divert attention. The mammaliform marauders, dubbed The Booby Trap Gang by police, first struck at a boutique in Kensington. "I was dusting," recalled shop owner Kenneth Mole, "when a voice said

"They're bigger than Pamela Anderson's, don't you think?" I looked up and they were practically in my face. I can't stress how big they were. My glasses misted up." While Mr Mole stood transfixed, another woman stole goods worth 1000 pounds. The gang has struck on eight other occasions, in one instance removing 70 yucca plants from a garden centre as staff ogled the diversionary paps. "We've got a pair of enormous leads," said one police officer, "and are keeping abreast of the situation." ♦

One down the tube, not One Across

Yet again old people have been getting stuck. In Walsall a 70 year old woman spent four days wedged in her bath. "I wouldn't have minded," she said, "except I missed two episodes of Emmerdale." Emmerdale Farm was the very last thing on the mind of retired French egg salesman Vincent Bern when he got his bottom stuck in the toilet. Disaster struck when Mr Bern, 75, of Beziers, spotted a corn on his foot while having a sit-on. "I lifted it up to look," he explained, "and just slid down the loo with my legs up in

the air. It was most uncomfortable." Not wanting to be discovered in such an ungainly posture, Mr Bern informed his wife that "he was doing a complex crossword puzzle and wasn't to be disturbed", in the meantime flushing the toilet repeatedly in an effort to refloat himself. His endeavours proved fruitless, however, and after 72 hours he eventually came clean and the fire brigade was called. "And there's me thinking he'd got stuck on One Across," chortled Mrs Bern. ♦

Hair-raising kiss flies off like giant bat

Good news for wig wearers! A United States surgeon has pioneered a method of surgically pinning toupees on their wearers' heads "for greater confidence in high winds". Unfortunately the technology comes too late for Solomon Vermin of New York, whose loose toupee resulted not merely in the devastation of his romantic aspirations, but also the death of an elderly commuter. Trouble started when Mr Vermin, 31, took librarian Esther Smudge on a date, concealing his bald head beneath a hand-spun, shoulder length, real hair wig. All

went well until the couple were in the subway, where Mr Vermin's wig was blown away by a sudden gust of wind. "I tried to make a joke of it," he explained, "by saying 'Gosh, isn't your kissing hair-raising!' But she said she only liked me because I looked like Bon Jovi and ran off crying." As if that wasn't enough, the air born barnet flew down the platform where an elderly woman mistook it for a giant bat and had a fatal coronary. "It's weird," said a morose Mr. Vermin, "because my cousin collects papier-mache bats." ♦

Obscene tattoo swathed for 30 years

It's been a hard week for tattoos. In the USA, Michael Wilson, the World's Most Decorated Man, finally went to the great tattoo parlour in the sky. Equally tragic, in its own way, was the discovery in Australia of The Most Hidden Tattoo Ever. The latter had been inscribed on the face of Andrew Rees of Perth as a stag-night prank prior to his wedding in 1966. Not wishing to upset his bride-to-be, the newly tattooed groom had arrived for the ceremony with his face swathed in bandages, claiming he had suffered severe facial burns in a freak road accident.

Amazingly his bride believed him, continuing to do so for the next 30 years, during which time he never once removed the bandages in her presence. The awful truth only emerged when Mr Rees' dressings somehow unraveled while he was asleep, allowing his wife her first glimpse for three decades of a face marred not by scar tissue but by the caption I F**k sheep, with a matching illustration on his left cheek. "I accept he did it out of love," said a trembling Mrs Rees, "which is exactly the spirit in which I'm divorcing him." ♦

VENDOR • Profile

BY MICHAEL WALTERS

Michelle and David are a unique **Our Voice** selling team. They have both been legally blind since birth. Working together they have helped each other and become very enthusiastic and successful **Our Voice** vendors.

"We just hope that the people like us. We try to be as nice as we can." Michelle says about selling the paper.

It has been difficult for both Michelle Semple and David Stocyl to relate to others throughout their lives. As much as they rely on their other senses, it still is hard to know how people are reacting to them.

They are extremely polite and at the same time very inquisitive about what's going on around them. Michelle can read a bit and tries to read a bit of the newspaper to David. David has asked if it can be put on tape.

They have both lived in Edmonton for about eight years. Michelle moved here on her own from Ontario when she was sixteen. David was born in Taber, Alberta and came to Edmonton after spending ten years in a school for the blind and the deaf in Vancouver.

They found out about selling the paper from another **Our Voice** vendor. Now they dedicate three days a week to standing on the downtown streets or in the Churchill L.R.T station to sell their papers.

"A little money is better than no money," David says. Both of them receive government assistance, but they are left with very little once their care needs are met. "We would just like to meet more people who'll care about us. We like people who talk to us and ask us about the paper."

They both realize that many people in today's economy don't have any extra money, so they are always happy with whatever number of papers they can sell in a day.

"We hope that we can make lots of money so one day we can help people like people have helped us."

Michelle and David have been room-mates for a year now.

"We like living together. It's great. There's always someone to talk to and we can help each other with things."

As well as not being able to see, both Michelle and David are hampered by mild cases of cerebral palsy. Even though it burdens their lives with more inconsistency, they try to remain as positive as they can.

When they aren't selling the paper they spend time



Michelle and David



has been playing all three instruments since he was a child. Michelle is learning to play the piano from David.

"Some days we can't help but feel sad and not very good at all, but it's way better to feel happy. So this is how we try to be."

Michelle hopes that she can continue selling the **Our Voice** newspaper and keep meeting nice people. David has the same wish, but desperately wants to put his musical talents to work by joining a band.

In a world that is so geared toward images and visions, Michelle and David struggle on and always try to move forward.

It isn't always easy, but with smiles on their faces and love in their hearts they do the best they can.

helping out at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. David entertains at the Drop-in by playing his organ or his accordian. He is also a skilled pianist. He

The people who bring you **OUR VOICE**

This newspaper exists because of the efforts of the people who sell it to you on the street, the vendors. For our vendors **OUR VOICE** is a job that helps them to be independent and self-employed. Each issue we highlight one of our vendors in Vendor Profile to let you know a little bit about the people who bring you **OUR VOICE**. ♦

OUR VOICE Authorized Vendor



Vendor Name _____
Number _____
Authorized by _____

OUR VOICE VENDOR'S CODE

- I will be sober at all times while working
- I will be polite to all members of the public
- I will vend only in areas that are authorized

All **OUR VOICE** vendors are required to wear an ID badge (contents above) and abide by a code of conduct. If you have any comments about our vendors, phone our distribution manager in your city (see page 5).

PHOTOS MICHAEL WALTERS



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COVER

How do you expect me to feed my kids?

The angry woman on the cover this issue is actually an actor, Robyn Rufiange, who is playing the role of a single mom on welfare.

The character, Susan Laflame, is a single mom recently on welfare. She's been going around to various social agencies to get help and to find a job.

The scene is from a skit called "Spin for Your Life" that was presented at the Urban Core Support Network Conference in Edmonton recently. The skits were designed to further dialogue and foster a critical look at the way the "system" works and how often we all get trapped in frustrating and disempowering situations.

Susan is tired of "going around" in circles; she's found a job and needs work boots, clothing and additional food money. The welfare worker asks her what she did with the money she's already received and questions her "financial management abilities," suggesting she get help from her family or boyfriend. She is mad and will not leave his office until the issues are resolved.

Leo Campos, who helped write and present the skits, says "From our standpoint, we both presented a given situation and then played a bit of the devil's advocate by challenging certain notions of what social work is. We looked at how the players in this 'Spin for Your Life' wheel are manipulated and we raised the questions 'are we doing the right thing?' or are there other models (ways) of being more effective in changing the economic and social structures that create the problem(s) in the first place?"

TALKING Back



Why are so many native people in desperate situations?

A woman: I believe it's a process that's been in place for quite some time. I'm Metis, myself. Alcoholism is the most insidious reason. Welfare is also an insidious process that keeps native people down and out. I don't like to put blame on many things, but it's kind of ironic, that native people being the first people in this land are treated the worst.

A man: There's too many politicians both white and native, are putting the money in their own pockets, and not giving damn about the native people.

Should more people go out and get a job?

While there were only two responses to last issue's question, more people phoned in to answer the question about jobs:

A man: "We still live in a society that operates under a slave mentality. There is no justification for poverty in the midst of plenty. How can people get jobs that don't exist?"

There is too much job scarcity out there. It is unrealistic to expect people not trained in modern technology to go out there and get a job that does not exist for them."

A woman: Yes, especially politicians, I'd like to see them go out and get a \$5 an hour job and get off their fat drinking butts, and do work like they expect others to do for minimum wage.

Give us a call and tell us what you think about the question this issue. Our Voice Talking Back:

1-800-882-5954 or 424-0624 in Edmonton.

Should welfare rates and budgets be raised?



LETTERS

Letter judged without knowing the family's situation

I am responding to Mr. R. Hogan's letter (October 15) about Sandy Gibson. I take exception to Hogan's comments about the Gibson family's being irresponsible and how they use and abuse the system. I don't recall any comments in Sandy Gibson's article about abuse other than Sandy being yelled at by a supervisor. As to Hogan's comments about staying in school and avoiding the pitfalls of drug and alcohol abuse, where in the article was anything said about alcohol or drugs being their problem?

Perhaps if Mr. Hogan had some insight in the problems that contributed to their present situation, he might have some compassion or empathy for the family. Sandy is a 55-year-old woman with little advanced education and a health problem which doesn't respond well to the medication prescribed. Her chances of finding employment which would support her family are slim to none. Like most women her age, Sandy married and stayed home to raise her family. Unfortunately she found herself in an abusive, controlling relationship which she finally left eight years ago. With no recent work experi-

ence and two children to support she turned to women's shelters, counsellors, and Alberta Social Services. I'm sure she thought she would give her daughters the chance for a better life if they weren't exposed to an abusive lifestyle on a daily basis. Unfortunately her experience with abuse, her lack of job skills, and her low education didn't prepare her or her daughters to be self-sufficient, self-confident, or prepared to deal with the demands of this society.

I am sure the Gibsons have made mistakes along the way, but haven't we all? As far as I'm concerned, the fact that Sandy and her family are still alive and together is something of a miracle. I don't see that Sandy has asked for someone else to solve her mistakes. Life doesn't always turn out the way we think it should. Since Sandy's family situation is as she described it in the article, should we kick the Gibsons when they're down? I think not. I wonder how Mr. Hogan's life would be if he had the same set of problems as Sandy.

Marilyn Clements
Calgary

A second poetry night

SONGS OF THE STREET

BY PENELOPE TIMLECK

A group of people from different walks of life gathered together recently in Edmonton for one common purpose: to share a little poetry with a lot of heart.

The second **Songs of the Street** poetry night, emceed by Peter Brown of CBC's Radioactive, was a chance for unknown poets to get up and read to a receptive audience of about 100 people. The poets received various prizes from sponsors of the contest, including cash prizes, gift certificates and T-shirts.

For a majority of the winning poets, the evening was the first time that any of them had ever publicly read their work. Some trembled with nervousness as they got up to speak in front of the microphone. Most of the readers were soft-spoken and when awarded cash prizes, expressed their gratitude with remarks like, "that should take care of my phone bill and power bill."

Others were excited for the opportunity to read their work aloud and let their energy flow as soon as they got behind the microphone. Josh Mageau, who captured the prize in the beat poetry category, delivered a long and powerful poem reminiscent of San Francisco beat poetry. The winners were selected by the sponsors in fourteen categories including: Street heros, Life on Drugs, Home, Women's issues and Spirituality. Many of the sponsors spoke of how hard it was to decide upon the winners so several categories had runners-

up as well. The readings were broken up by musical interludes. Jennifer Kratz and Laurie Matheson played touching and energetic songs. Kratz spoke about how she felt when her brother was born. "I was feeling frustrated so I decided to write, I guess that's what a poet does, you have to get those words out." Everyone found a way to get the words out.

Heather Slade won several categories with her evocative and very personal poems about a tough life.

Home by Leon Bourassa, who won the Shelter category, was an inspiring poem about home being, "not where the heart is, home is where you go to be safe."

Michael Walters or **Our Voice** and Faith Brace of the Inner City Pastoral Ministry were instrumental in organizing this second evening of poetry. "It's just great," said Michael, "to hear people tell their own stories."

The poets may also have their poetry published in a second edition of the **Songs of the Street** poetry book. The first edition of the poetry book was published last summer, after the first **Songs of the Street** poetry night, by **Our Voice** newspaper and the Inner City Pastoral Ministry. The book sells for \$5 a copy and is available from **Our Voice** vendors in Edmonton.

Winning poems from the poetry night will be published in future issues.



POETRY NIGHT

Top: Jennifer Kratz sang moving songs.

Above: Michael Walters, Our Voice distribution person in Edmonton, was the main organizer of the event.

Above right: John Zapantis presented his winning poem and was a real wake-up for everyone.

Right: Heather Slade won several prizes for her moving and personal poetry.

Photos by Jim

The Graveyard Shift

9
Dragging weary ass
out of bed
grab a java
run for bus
clinking coins
find a seat
ignore rowdy teens
at the back
rest my head
Over a pothole
Ouch
watch for stop
get off
dark, cold walk
enter smoky cafe
tie on stained apron

paste on tired smile
on exhausted face
take orders
feed, clean, pace
till dawn
hang up apron
pasty grimace
feet hurt
lets ache
arms heavy
run for bus
clinking coins

by Heather Slade
Winner in the category
"Working"

My hands show scars
Of years of labour
My mind loses memories
From minutes ago
Life's journey has
Worn me to the bone.
My body is weak.

I no longer wage up
Feeling restored
I no longer walk
Straight and tall

I can no longer remember
The simple things in life
I am old

Friends from the past
are doing well
The secret of their success
Was going to school
I don't even remember
the last book I read.
I know nothing.

Life is hard
I've lived enough of it
But I'm pulling through
As a horse drawn plow
Stuck in a mass of clay
I still have time to change,
I'm only seventeen

by Leon Bourassa
Winner in the category
"Looking back on sadness"

An image of an old man

Vendors seeking employment

Most of the people who sell Our Voice are looking for good jobs.

This column is to let potential employers know about the talents and commitment of some of the people available.

Lorna Scambler needs work right away in Calgary

Lorna Scambler has been an **Our Voice** vendor in Calgary since November, 1995. For health reasons, she can no longer work outside during the winter. She's looking for a job as a restaurant cleaner or a bus person. She has fourteen years of experience in this area. Lorna is also interested in doing house-cleaning on a contract basis. She says her rates are reasonable. She describes herself as a hard worker, reliable and energetic. She is bondable. Lorna can be reached at 237-7420. Please a message if she's not there.



Linda Dumont in Edmonton

Long-time **Our Voice** writer and cartoonist Linda Dumont (above) is available to design business cards, letterheads, brochures and newsletters and edit term papers. Studying journalism and graphics at Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton, Linda is a seasoned writer with experience in photography and desktop publishing. For more information call Linda at 486-9536.

Save grocery money

There are a growing number of Edmontonians working together to save grocery money. They are members of the WECAN Food Co-op. Each month individuals pay \$15, \$30 or even \$45 (depending on how much food they want) by the first Friday of the month, members gather to divide up and take home their food.

Each \$15 order has a retail value of about \$25. Members describe the amount as enough food for two adults and two small children for a week!

What's in each order? There is a minimum of 1.5 kg of

meat, at least 1 starch food (such as bread, rice, pasta or bread), at least 2 kinds of fruit and 3 or 4 kinds of vegetables. Each month the orders are different depending on availability, prices and what has been in the orders in the recent past. There is also a sale and barter table to trade off what you don't like.

How do you get involved? It cost \$5 for a yearly membership and each member needs to "volunteer" 2 hours each month to help run the Food Co-op. Anyone can join! Please call Cheri at 496-5938 for more information about a depot near you.

FICTION BY LAURIE MCCULLOUGH

Our man and his bride wind up in Winnipeg, after hitching crazily through Saskatchewan. But we dart back to another crazy time in Winnipeg, with Cindy.

We were broke and homeless on the corner of Portage and Century. I didn't care. Charmaine smiled. She had such a wonderful, rueful smile. It could charm the budgies out of Woolworth's cages. She said:

"Just you and me, kid," and I guess she was right. We went to the Broadway Sal's, met two guys from Arizona. They didn't have any money. One of them was going to beat my brains in, but his friend did all he could to prevent that. We ended up buddies. They took us to their place. It was three rooms and a big landing at the top of the stairs. An attic suite, on the third floor of an old house on Balmoral Street. After a couple days, they took off. We ended up having those three rooms. The landlord was an old Ukrainian, who said:

"Just be polite to me," and never asked for money.

Good thing.
We never gave him money.

I was always polite.

We got jobs, working for the Salisbury House. We were floats. Got sent to different places

on different nights. Sometimes, we'd be at separate places for a week or two, but we mostly got sent as a couple. I could cook, pretty good.

Charmaine was a dandy waitress. I never got the hang of cooking eggs, though, and Charmaine told me:

"It's alright, for you. You just have to cook the stuff."

I have to put it in front of them," with a look on her face which said she'd set a dead pigeon before someone's horrified eyes, feathers and all, if I was the guy who cooked it.

Working nights for Sal's is a life experience, all on its own. The places were full of deadbeats, the kind of people you can find in any prison. Decent people never went there, after midnight, which kind of explains why I spent so much time in Salisbury Houses.

After midnight.

We stayed in Winnipeg for about three months, then up and left. Before we left, we smoked some hash with a guy named Jim Cameron. He had a face like the business end of a bulldozer and a very big heart. I met him when Cindy Franklin and I were in Winnipeg. It was winter, cold as cold can only be in Winnipeg, in the winter. I had a little green car with a great heater but, if you stopped the engine for a few

hours, it wouldn't start. This was in the time of hostels and drop-in centres. Cindy and I discovered a place called C.R.Y.P.T. and it was good for free meals, places to crash. I was, to begin with, on my way to Ontario, to see my folks. Would have made it, too, but Cindy was on the side of the road in a long, black, coat which hung all the way to the toes of her boots. I couldn't just leave her, standing in the rain. When I picked her up I had no idea she was five months worth of knocked up.

Neither, strangely enough, did she.

Being pregnant, she was a hungry girl. She ate NOVEMBER 15 my money like rain eats sand castles. We were broke by the time we got to the Peg. I found some sleazy dudes who told me they'd let us stay in an apartment full of stolen goods, if we looked after things. They explained:

"God helps those who help themselves," and, after a few days of eating in church basements, sleeping in the homes of ageing hippies with dirty houses, I was happy to help myself. Besides, I wanted a bath the way you want to breathe. We moved in. About two weeks later, enough cops to form a regi-

ment knocked on the door.

Then, they broke it down.

That door hit the carpet like a champion swimmer hits the water. I wondered what was going to happen to us. I didn't have to wonder very hard. What I thought was going to happen was exactly what happened. They took us to the police station, put me in a small room with no windows. I was a drifter. No cash, no one to look after my interests. I wouldn't admit a thing, so a big cop beat on me. I'll never forget it. There wasn't an ounce of passion in that beating. I looked in his eyes. There was no anger, no rage, not even a drop of emotion as he smacked me around. He hauled me out of the corner I curled up and covered my head in. I looked in his eyes.

Dead as the eyes of a salmon.

He was just doing his job, the way I'd pump gas.

After I gave up, signed everything they put in front of me, they brought Cindy to my cell. We looked at each other, through the bars. She held both my hands in hers while she mouthed, silently:

"Come for me," and I swore I would.

We'd been through a lot, together, by then.

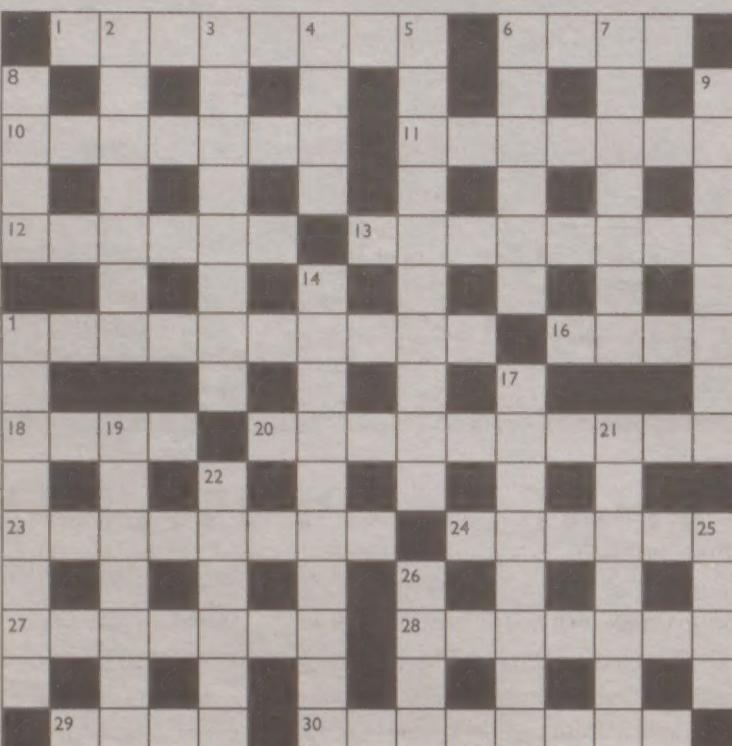
Part 6 of **Kiss the Bride** will appear next issue.

CROSSWORD • Puzzle 43

A C R O S S

- Canada's national sport (8)
- Garden building - or fur come astray? (4)
- Menacing (7)
- Poor people, unlike princes (7)
- Cubes of meat served on a skewer (6)
- Elegant dive (4,4)
- Tower of London guards (4,6)
- Resident of northernmost part of Britain (4)
- Cow juice (4)
- Police's collection of mix-n-match facial features (9)
- Opposite of longitude (8)
- Golden film statues with swords (6)
- Annoys syringes? (7)
- Called together for a common cause (7)
- To leave something in its current state (2,2)
- Smelling pretty bad (8)

BY SUSAN ANDREWS



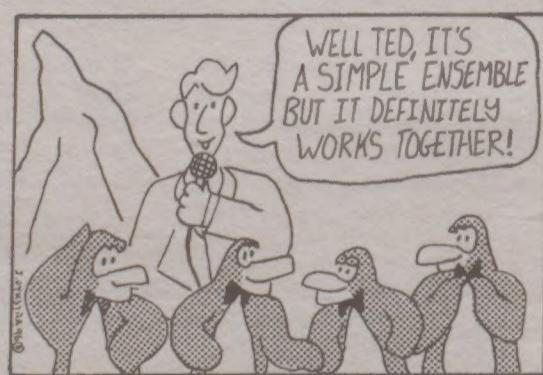
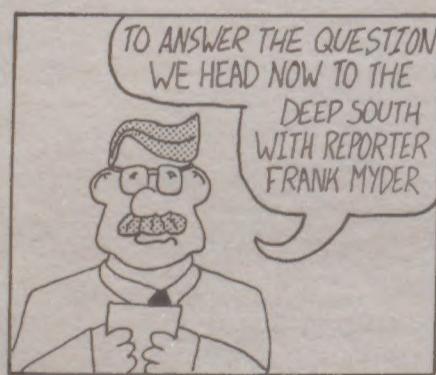
D O W N

- Friendly, good-natured (7)
- Soft drink once made with sassafrass (4,4)
- Wide belt or weight for window blinds (4)
- Giving strength to (10)
- Turns away, rejects (6)
- Speech expressing grief (7)
- To make fun of (4)
- Fireproof mineral and material (8)
- What library carrels are often used as (5,5)
- Awkward, clumsy like Inspector Clouseau (8)
- Walk softly and carry a ___ (3,5)
- Gets into a soapy mess or thick sweat (7)
- Spaghetti is seen as the quintessential ___ food (7)
- Individual box or standing rooms for livestock (6)
- Students Against Drunk Driving (4)
- Mountain in Japan, or a film? (4)

Answers to November 1 Crossword #42

Puzzle #43 answers will be published in the December 1 issue of Our Voice.

SOUPLINE BOB



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Community calendar celebrates victories

Every month there's an uplifting personal tale of survival and life against the odds in a new calendar published in Edmonton recently.

Marking the UN International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, the Edmonton Social Planning Council released the special calendar, *Voice in Action*. The beautiful black and white images and full size calendar pages make it an attractive package, and it's full of good stories. The calendar is "about people who have survived poverty and found hope," said Brian Bechtel, Planning Council director, at the Calendar's release. "It is a testimony to their struggles and

their victories." "We see men and women who overcome incredible obstacles to keep their families together."

Bechtel also drew attention to the increased hardship faced by many people in the year for the eradication of poverty. "In the single-minded drive to reduce public expenditures we have lost the ability to dream of a community where people don't have to rely on Food Banks, where children always have enough to eat and everybody has a safe warm place to live."

The Calendar is available through a number of agencies, and is being sold on Edmonton streets by **Our Voice** vendors, for a \$5 contribution.



**How
are we
doing?**

We need to hear from you!

We want to keep this newspaper interesting, informative and enjoyable enough to keep you interested in buying it from the vendors. Please take a moment to mail in this slip to let us know what you think about how we are doing.

1. What do you look for first in the newspaper?

- Short items, page 2, 3 and 4
- Vendor profiles, people stories
- Editorial page and letters
- Feature articles in the centre
- Fiction stories, poetry
- Cartoons
- Crossword

2. What recent articles or pieces in the paper have you liked or have caught your attention?

For the following questions can you simply indicate whether you would more likely agree or disagree:

3. Our Voice articles are fair and informative.

Agree Disagree

What do you read most thoroughly?

4. I read quite a bit of each issue I buy.

- Agree Disagree

5. Our governments need to do more about the poverty crisis.

- Agree Disagree

6. I would volunteer more of my time and money to helping needy people if I could.

- Agree Disagree

7. I tend to support traditional family values.

- Agree Disagree

8. If you were the editor what changes would you make to the paper?

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The 1997 Canadian Weather Trivia Calendar is packed with stories, zany trivia and weather history from Canada and around the world. David Phillips, a senior climatologist with Environment Canada puts the calendar together and spoke with Marilyn Clements in Calgary.

MARILYN: David, what decided you on doing *The Canadian Weather Trivia Calendar*?

DAVID: I started out doing a Top 10 List of weather events in Canada. When I realized the volume of material I had, it expanded into the calendar. The first version was black and white, done through the publications department of Environment Canada. During that time it became an underground hit, people were copying it and passing it around to friends and family.

MARILYN: Why do you think the calendar is a sales success?

DAVID: All Canadians can relate to the weather and Canadians seem to be very weather-astute. Canada has a reputation around the world it seems based on hockey and weather. People are very aware of and fascinated by the changeability of the weather here. One thing about weather is, it is real. Everyone is affected by weather. In nine years it has become a tradition for some to get the calendar. There is also a French version.

MARILYN: What types of questions do you get asked about the weather?

DAVID: Some are real stumpers, like what are rain drops shaped like? Many people think rain is either tear drop or pear shaped but really rain is shaped more like a hamburger bun - flat on the bottom and curved on the top. I also answer a lot of questions about weather terms such as snow showers, which means a snowfall of short duration that moves on.

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